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THE LIFE OF OFFERING

THE LIFE OF OFFERING

MEDITATIONS
UPON THE
PASSION AND RESURRECTION
OF
OUR BLESSED LORD

Arranged for use during Lent and Holy Week and for
the Fridays throughout the Year

BY THE REVEREND
ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL KNOWLES
Author of "The Triumph of the Cross," "Come Unto Me,"
"The Belief and Worship of the Anglican Church,"
"The Holy Christ Child," etc., etc.



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TO
THE HONOUR AND GLORY
OF
THE BLESSED PASSION AND PRECIOUS DEATH,
THE MIGHTY RESURRECTION AND GLORIOUS ASCENSION
OF
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.



"The Preaching of The Cross
is to them that perish foolishness: but unto those which are saved
it is The Power of God."

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PREFACE.

The meditations in this little volume were delivered in large part "*extempore*," in the course of a series of Good Friday addresses upon the Seven Words from the Cross. They are now presented in a slightly adapted form, being arranged so as not only to fulfil their original purpose, but also to be suitable for reading on the Fridays throughout the year. The latter object may specially commend itself to those who realize how often the lessons of the Cross are forgotten, when Good Friday has passed. The Roman Numerals designate the respective Fridays.

In preparing such a work, shortness and simplicity are most desirable, but the thoughts and lessons which suggest themselves are so many, that it is exceedingly difficult on the one hand to say all that one would like to say and on the other hand so to make selection as to embody both the old and the new. In the little book here presented, the author and preacher has omitted many things that might be found helpful, in order to confine himself largely to the one simple theme of the Life of Offering, the complete consecration of ourselves to fulfil the Will of God. If there be found little that may be new or strange, the familiar flowers may possibly be arranged in a different way, and so contribute in some measure at least to the strengthening of the spiritual life, the Glory of God, and the Honour of Our Divine Redeemer.

A PRAYER.

O LORD JESU CHRIST, Son of the Living God, Our Most Blessed Lord and Redeemer: Grant us, Priest and People, so to have in remembrance Thy Life and Death and Character that we may pattern ourselves after Thee, so far as in us lies. Give us grace ever to go upward and onward, as we try day by day more completely to consecrate ourselves and souls and bodies to do the Will of God. Let Thy Blessed Passion and Precious Death show forth in us in our sorrow for sin and our death unto self: Thy Mighty Resurrection and Glorious Ascension in our living the risen life and our seeking the things which are above. Wash us in Thy Precious Blood, consecrate us with Thy Cross, illuminate us with Thy Light, strengthen us with Thy Power, and make us like unto Thee, meek and lowly and humble of heart. And if it be Thy Will, so prevent and bless us in all that we do, that in life we may live to the Honour and Glory of God, and in death may rise to the Life Immortal; through Thy Merits and Mediation, O Lord, Our Strength and Our Redeemer!

I.

THE LIFE OF OFFERING.

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—
Romans xii.

YEAR by year, on each recurring Good Friday the Church calls her children to meet at the foot of the Cross and look upon Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ nailed to the Tree of Shame. The Cross is the divider of men; it is the parting of the ways; ever separating the wheat from the chaff, the good from the bad, for "it is to those who perish, foolishness; but to those who are saved, the power of God." To this Cross, sooner or later, all men must come, to "*look on Him whom they pierced,*" either in faith, love, and repentance, or in mockery, hate, and blasphemy.

For the history of the two malefactors is ever being repeated, as the solemn spectacle of the

¹ Zechariah xii. 10, St. John xix. 37.

Suffering Saviour moves one person to seek mercy and pardon, and confirms another to continue hard and sullen: the Cross saving the one and condemning the other, as with the two thieves on Calvary.

*"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me,"*¹ saith the Master. The Cross is the Magnet that attracts, the Balance that weighs, the Judge that decides. Its cross arms extending outward, collect from all parts of the world; its lower arm, buried in the ground, points those of the earth earthy to the darkness of hell; its upper arm, raised towards the skies, lifts the spiritually minded to the light of heaven; and when men finally look upon the Cross, the sacred symbol of our salvation, one last chance is ever given to the sinner to make his peace with God and be washed in the Precious Blood of Jesus.

The devout Saint Bonaventura, on once being asked by Saint Thomas Aquinas to see the library from which he drew his thoughts and teachings, pointed to the Crucifix and said that all he knew he learned there. So we, looking upon Jesus

¹ St. John xii. 32.

Christ and Him crucified, may learn many precious lessons for our soul's health, for the Cross is as a fountain never dry, from which continually flow the waters of life. For in the Cross and in the Seven Words spoken by the Master, can be seen set forth the Lord's Prayer, the Seven Beatitudes, the Seven Virtues, and those ever fruitful lessons of pardon, penitence, love, trust, devotion, consecration, resignation, and the like, revealing the love of God, the awfulness of sin, and the sacrifice of Jesus.

Yet perhaps there is no more inspiring and illuminating thought than that which we would now fain bring out, the Life of Offering or the complete consecration of ourselves to God, with all that we love and all that we have, to be His forever and ever, in this world and in the next, so that we may say, "O Lord, give what Thou commandest and command what Thou wilt," as we live and die for God's Glory.

Let it then be our practice not only at length upon Good Friday but also in briefer way upon every Friday to look upon the Master, offering His life for us. Let us see the Precious Blood being

shed, let us hear the blessed words being spoken, and let the dreadful reality stamp its indelible impress on heart and soul, so that the Sacrifice of Calvary may not be unavailing for us. Nor let us fail to see if we cannot trace some likeness to ourselves in the faces of those about the Cross, that if we are among those who love and adore, our devotion may deepen with each changing hour; or if we are among those who mock and revile, we may repent and reform ere death forever settles our doom. Saint or sinner, it matters not in the coming, if only in the leaving, that Cross with the Blessed Body of the Master has made us real penitents indeed, washed in His Precious Blood, going forth to life or death, pardoned and in peace, the true children of God.

II.

THE OFFERING OF OURSELVES TO GOD.

THE FIRST WORD: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"—St. Luke xxiii. 34.

I. OUR LORD stands on Calvary, waiting to stretch Himself upon the Cross. The last awful chapter in His Passion is to be fulfilled. For hours the Master has been suffering, as none other ever suffered. From the time when in the upper room He had instituted the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood (His Passion in Holy Mystery), and in the Garden of Gethsemane had endured the Agony and Bloody Sweat as He saw, as it were, a vision of the shame of the Cross and the sin of the world, Our Lord had fully realized the words of the Prophet, "*He is despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*"¹

Betrayed by one Apostle, denied by another,

¹ Isaiah liii. 8.

falsely accused, mocked, reviled, buffeted, spat upon, scourged, and crowned with thorns by the Jews or Romans, with His Sacred Body worn by fasting and His Precious Blood flowing from His wounds, the Master never wavered in His love for man, but patiently bore all the agony and humiliation that He might offer Himself for the salvation of the world. With ropes about His neck and hands and carrying the heavy cross upon His shoulder, He had been led away as a sheep to the slaughter. Jeered at by the mob, urged on by the soldiers, Jesus had stumbled along the Way of Sorrows, repeatedly falling under the heavy weight of the Cross, to arise covered with blood and dust, again to struggle forward. No pity or sympathy met His glance, save in the group of weeping women, who awaited Him at the turn of the road; but instead, there had rung the hoarse cries of "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" as the crowding multitudes raged at Him Whose whole life on earth had been one perfect ministry of love. On our earthly journey if trials and tribulations continually beset us, let us for our cheer and comfort picture Jesus on the Way of Sorrows!

II. At last they stand on Calvary, where Simon has borne the Cross, when Our Blessed Lord was unable longer to carry it. The hole is dug, the soldiers are ready, the mob stands expectant. The hour of the sacrifice has come, and Jesus, of His Own accord, stretches His Sacred Body upon the arms of the Cross.

There is the sound of striking steel. There is the sound of a pleading Voice. Mortal men are crucifying the Lord of Glory, and He in words of tender mercy and yearning love is praying for those who are driving those dreadful nails through Hands and Feet, lacerating His Sacred Flesh, causing exquisite suffering, and staining Body and Cross, nails and soldiers with the crimson tide of the Saviour's Blood. Yet in His awful agony, Our Lord has no word of anger or reproach, but prayers for pardon for those who so used Him, saying again and again, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

The Master is praying for those who nailed Him to the Tree! He is pleading His Passion for the souls of sinners! He is offering Himself, His

¹ St. Luke xxiii. 34.

Life of Love, that the world may be saved. He is all love and He presents that love with His Life and Passion before the throne of God, offering His merits and mediation for sinful men.

What inspiration and power is there for us in this example of the Master: of prayer, of pardon, of the presentation of the Passion, "*for greater love hath no man than this: that he die for another.*"¹ For the Saviour is fulfilling the will of God, is giving His life to God, and is pleading for the souls of men. May we not see, among many other lessons, the First Word from the Cross teaching us the Life of Offering, in the presentation of ourselves and souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice unto God, in a life hid with Christ in God, through union with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, which is the continual pleading of the Passion?

III. As truly as Christian Life is life in union with Our Lord, as Christian character is character in union with Christ, so Christian offering is offering in union with Christ. The purpose of our earthly life is to prepare us for

¹ See St. John xv. 13.

heaven, which aim is accomplished by our "following the example of Our Saviour Christ and being made like unto Him." Consequently as He offered Himself to do the will of the Father, we must offer ourselves. Yet when we look at our lives, ourselves, our prayers, praises, penances, good works, whatever they may be, they are all full of faults and stained with sins, and are all unworthy, unacceptable, and unavailing unless united with the offering of Our Blessed Lord, and joined to His merits and mediation. This offering of Our Lord, we have seen, finds its climax in the Passion, that "one, full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world,"¹ for therein the Only-begotten Son of the Father offered Himself as the Lamb of God in the sacrifice once for all made on the Cross on Calvary, but evermore presented in glory in heaven, as our Lord "*ever liveth to make intercession for us,*"² and pleaded in Holy Mystery on earth, in the Holy Eucharist or Sacrifice of the Altar. Here therefore is provided the means of union with Christ's

¹ See Baptismal Office.

² Hebrews vii. 25.

³ Canon of Cons., Communion Office, P. B.

Sacrifice of Himself once offered, for one intention of Our Lord in the Institution of the Holy Eucharist was to leave the Church a way of commemorating the Sacrifice of the Cross, and in the Holy Mysteries, to offer the Memorial of His Passion for the living and the dead, "*showing forth His death till He come.*"¹

IV. In the Holy Eucharist, thus pleading the Passion and continuing the intercession of the Cross, is found the very key to the higher and holier life. It bridges earth and heaven, unites God and man, and sanctifies each and every part of our earthly existence, bringing us into the very presence-chamber of the Risen King and at the same time remembering the Death Bed of the Saviour Christ. Received, it is the Bread of Life, feeding our starved souls with the life-giving Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Offered, it avails for the quick and the dead and is the all-prevailing prayer of the Church. The highest privilege of a priest is to stand at the altar and offer this Holy Sacrifice. The highest privilege of a layman is

¹ See I. Cor. xi. 26.

to receive the Blessed Sacrament and assist at this pleading of the Passion.

Think of the saints, past and present, who have found in these Holy Mysteries their most precious food, their most adoring worship, the very life itself, since Him they offered and received was Jesus Christ the Crucified and Risen Lord. Is not the main reason for the lack of faith, hope, and love to-day, for the absence of real spirituality, for the poor and halting prayers, because the sacrifice of the Altar has lost its proper place in the life and worship of many people, because thousands are living apart from the Sacramental Presence of Jesus and fail to plead His Passion?

V. What would our life be, if we could *daily* come to that sacred Presence and *daily* plead the Passion? Might this not at least be the *ideal* of our Life of Offering, even if we failed closely to approach it: frequent Communion, frequent worship, ever offering this Holy Sacrifice of the Altar on Sundays, Holy Days, and Saints' Days, before the great turning points and on the great anniversaries of our life, in trial and temptation, in sorrow and sickness, in joy and pleasure, as our light,

love, life, strength, and refreshment, offering with the Offering of Our Lord ourselves, our souls, our bodies, our faith, our hope, our charity, our prayers, our alms, our sacrifices, our good works, our confessions, our intercessions, our thanksgivings, our praises, bringing before God ourselves and others, united to Christ in the pleading of His Death upon the Cross? No one can overestimate this offering the Blessed Sacrament with "intention," for all for whom we would intercede, whether others or ourselves: "*Between our sins and their reward, we set the Passion of Thy Son Our Lord.*"¹

VI. In our Life of Offering, united with this Offering of Jesus, there will be our duty to ourselves and to others.

The Life of Offering begins with self, according to the old adage, "Charity begins at home." This must be *entire* dedication to God. As when principles are fully assured, the proper application follows without special rule, so when our lives are perfectly offered to God, the daily practice of holiness needs little indication. This perfect of-

¹ Dr. Bright, Hymn 228.

fering of self to God practically begins and ends with the *will*. When the will is yielded to God, the crisis of life is past. Not until our will is in perfect conformity with the will of God, not until we can truly say to God, "I will what Thou wilt and what Thou wilt not, I do not will," is the conquest made, and perfect peace enters into the soul of man, for peace comes in the giving up of self entirely to the Divine Will. As long as one particle of self-will remains, as long as there is any compromise or half measure, we have neither rest nor resignation, but when self is conquered and offered to God, then, though the waves of sin, sorrow, or suffering are beating against us, we will be in perfect peace, as God reigns and rules in rightful sovereignty.

VII. Perfect contrition places the sinner's soul in submission to the will of God: perfect contrition comes from looking on the Cross: and is that love of God and that sorrow for sin which, seeing life in its true aspect and God and man in their relative positions, bows the human will before the Divine Will, and, in the words of Saint Augustine, says: "*I have sought pleasure in creatures which is*

only to be found in Thee; and now behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit; for Thou hast made me for Thyself and my heart hath found no true rest until it found rest in Thee." The Life of Offering is thus the submitting of our *self* to God and the perfect acceptance by our will of the Divine Will, by which we come to will as God wills us to will, to do as God wills us to do, to think as God wills us to think, to speak as God wills us to speak, the doing, thinking, and speaking little by little coming into accord with the will that wills the Will of God, by the practice of constant recollection of the Divine Presence.

VIII. See now how submission to the Divine Will affects our relations with others. We have enemies, who have grievously injured or offended us: Self-will would give like for like, but the will conformed to the Divine Will *forgives* and prays for them. For can we refuse to forgive or pray for those who despitefully use us when we think of God's will that they be forgiven, when we think of the gracious words of pardon of Jesus Christ on the Cross? Naught that man can do to us can compare with what man did to Our Lord! Surely

if He could forgive and pray for those who nailed Him to the Tree, we can do likewise for those who wrong us, and can offer the Holy Eucharist for their pardon and repentance.

Or we have dear ones, and we would help them: so again we take their virtues, their faults, their needs, whatever they may be, and present them before the throne of Grace, in union with Christ's Holy Passion. We may not see or know the result, but we may be sure of this: that there is no more prevailing prayer that we can offer for those we love than the pleading of the Sacrifice of the Altar, which can never be fruitless or unavailing.

IX. Here, then, we may see one lesson from the First Word from the Cross: the Life of Offering, lived and offered in union with the Holy Eucharist, the memorial of the Passion, a life lived with Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. That life naturally is largely a hidden life; it is unknown to the world about us; it is so rich in inner peace and joy and exaltation of spirit that it is too sacred to reveal even to those nearest and dearest. For that life, for all its faults and failings, in its

outward fruits, is nevertheless a life hid with Jesus, Who is gradually transforming such souls into the likeness of Himself, as they see the "*Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ*,"¹ that dear Lord Who is just as really present in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, as when once He walked the paths of earth or as now He stands at the right hand of God, just as really present, though after a different manner, that is spiritually and supernaturally.

Shall we not resolve to live this Life of Offering, ever submitting our will to the Divine Will, ever pleading the Passion of Christ, making the Holy Eucharist the centre of our life, offering that Sacrifice of the Altar for ourselves and for others, for friends and for foes, for the living and for the dead? For by this constant coming into the Sacramental Presence of the Master and offering our life to God in union with the Offering of Christ, we will make to ourselves an atmosphere of religion, we will gain the spirit of recollection, and we will win such measure of Divine Charity as may enable us to live and die in Christ and

¹ II. Cor. iv. 6.

rise to see God's Beautiful Face in the life hereafter. This is the call of the Crucified One to those who would become the true children of the Father. This is the counsel of the Holy Scriptures, wherein God, speaking by His chosen Apostle, bids us to present ourselves "*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.*"¹ The measure of our response will be the measure of our love for God and of our devotion to the Master.

¹ Romans xii.

III.

THE OFFERING OF OUR SINS TO GOD.

THE SECOND WORD: "*Verily, I say unto thee: to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*"—St. Luke xxiii. 43.

X. THERE were two thieves crucified with Our Lord, one on the right and one on the left. These men were probably guilty of many sins and crimes, such as theft, murder, and rapine, and were now suffering the just penalty of their life of evil-doing. As they saw Jesus hanging on the Cross, they had mocked and jeered with the multitudes. Hardened and shameless, they had no pity or feeling for One they must have seen to be holy and innocent of any wrong-doing, for His very sanctity was a condemnation of their own wickedness.

Sin, as it always does, had blinded their eyes, had deadened their ears, and conscience, which should have been the constant medium for hearing the still, small voice, the Voice of God, no longer

acted, or, if it did act, did so in vague and uncertain way.

Yet now, in the Presence of Christ Crucified, face to face with death and with the Master unto Whom all judgment hath been committed,¹ repentance at the last hour, so rare and so dangerous to await, came to one of the malefactors. He stopped his mocking of the Master, he reproved his comrade in sin, as he saw his life drawing to its close with nothing but evil-doing to offer. How long ago seemed those days of innocent childhood, how almost forgotten those faces of father and mother, who had once hoped so much of him, but how clear seemed his first steps in sin and the many years of wickedness which had followed those little beginnings of evil! For those sins, unchecked and unrepented of, had eaten like some cancerous disease into his whole nature until naught but evil was thought and done. Now he was face to face with death and damnation. The callous indifference or fancied unbelief of the years past no longer availed, for he saw the certainty of merited punishment. Yet as the

¹ St. John v. 22.

cold sweat stands upon his brows, and the chill of fear comes upon his body, he suddenly remembers those wonderful words just uttered by Jesus as He was nailed to the Cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Could there be hope for him? He looks at the Cross and sees the Precious Blood staining the Sacred Body of the Lord. Could that Precious Blood avail for him? Suddenly faith, hope, and love spring up within his soul. The Cross does its work! The thief will offer to God, himself and his sins—for that is all he has to offer—he will lay those sins upon the Sin-Bearer, to be washed away in His Precious Blood: "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.*" It is the cry of a child, the cry of a penitent, the cry of one who has become meek and lowly of heart, for the petition is only to be remembered in mercy. "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise,*" the Saviour answers, in His love giving pardon and peace to the penitent, absolution from the penalty of his sin, blessing in the world to come. And when later, the thief lay dead upon his cross,

¹ St. Luke xxiii. 42.

² St. Luke xxiii. 43.

his soul was with Jesus, there to be purified and prepared in the Place of Departed Spirits for the joys of heaven.

XI. O! that solemn lesson from the Cross: two thieves crucified, one thief repentant; for our warning and for our encouragement, that we may see the dreadful danger of putting off repentance for ourselves, yet of our charity may still hope for others we see continuing their evil life.

Here then is our lesson: the Offering of our sins to God, in the practice of perfect contrition, in the carrying of our burden to the Cross in Confession, in the washing away in the Precious Blood in Absolution. Sins may be venial or mortal, that is: of great gravity and done willingly, knowingly, and deliberately and so cutting us off from God, or of less moment, grieving God, yet still preserving our union with Him. All sins, however, in greater or less degree, are offences against God's love, and all merit punishment here or hereafter. Sins ever increasingly multiply, for where virtues like fragrant flowers grow slowly, sins like noxious weeds spread rapidly, and so poisonous are they, that ere we know it, the

venial sins have become mortal sins and the evil habits have become deeply rooted in our life. Sin caused the Fall, brought death and disease into the world, nailed Jesus to the Cross, and ever seeks to ruin our souls, for sin is the result of the temptation of the Devil, who while he can never force us to sin, by suggestion soon persuades us, if we do not be on our guard and use the weapon God has provided: His sanctifying power or Divine Grace, given in prayer and sacrament.

XII. To escape the bondage and penalty of sin, no half-hearted measures will avail. The sins must be *killed*, not *wounded*; they must be *plucked out*, not *trimmed down*; they must be sought for and found in examination of self and gathered together and offered in confession to God. To cut off some sins and to cherish others is but a compromise with the Devil, a bargain which invariably weakens the will and exposes the soul to ruination. As a garment eaten by moths, tiny creatures as they are, is absolutely worthless, so the soul, eaten by sins, little as they may be, is entirely spoiled. No virtues avail so long as vices are cherished; no good works merit so long as evil

reigns in the heart. We do not help a plague-stricken city by building beautiful monuments. We do not become clean by wearing handsome clothes. So with the soul, infected with evil and stained with sins, we need to seek the source or cause of the disorder and to use the cleansing waters of Contrition. What the world to-day needs above all things is the *sense of sin*, such appreciation of it as sets in bold, bare, dreadful contrast the infinite love and mercy and goodness of God and the awful ungratefulness, injury, and vileness of sin. For our hatred and horror of sin should not be because we fear hell, but rather because we grieve the Good God and make such evil return for His love.

XIII. The offering of our sins to God is thus a means to this end. In the light of Divine Grace, assisted by the Holy Ghost, we search for our sins, we see our sins, we know them one by one, we hate those sins, we would free us of their burden, we would make a fresh start. With the thief, we look at the Tree. With the thief we hear Our Lord's gracious words. With the thief we would lay our sins at the foot of the Cross, *offering those sins*

with our sinful selves to the Master, for His Precious Blood to fall upon them. For is He not the Sin-Bearer,¹ the Scape-Goat? Does He not say: "*Come unto Me all ye that travail*" (labouring and struggling against evil habits) "*and are heavy laden*" (bowed under the weight of our sins) "*and I will give you rest*" (pardon and peace in Absolution) ?

XIV. O! what a relief is it to the sin-stricken soul to bear its burden to the Cross, and to offer those sins to God in real repentance! Not only dreadful doings, such as murder, adultery, and theft, which, God grant, we may never commit, but also any form of pride, anger, covetousness, impurity, envy, sloth, and gluttony, as well as any and all sins of omission and commission, for they all should be known and offered. For let us note carefully that in the Scriptures, almost all of those who are mentioned as being cast out of the kingdom of heaven are those sinning by *omission*, such as the man with the one talent, and the foolish virgins, who failed to *do* what they

¹ Isaiah liii. 6.

² Lev. xvi. 21, 22; Isaiah lxiii. 6.

³ St. Matthew xi. 28.

should have done. Yet when we see our sins in all their clearness and when we tremble at the fresh assaults of temptation, we may remember for our encouragement, that as savage dogs, for all their fierce barking,¹ do no harm so long as the door is barred, so our temptations, for all their horrid suggestions, do not injure the soul so long as the will closes the approach.

XV. Let us learn, then, to offer our sins to God. First we must look on the Cross and by the sight of Jesus Crucified get true Contrition, which is love of God and sorrow for our sins. Then we must search our consciences and confess to God, alone or in the presence of a priest, each and every sin, offering them to Jesus, making this confession, briefly every night and more at length before Communion. Thus by this continual offering of our sins to God, we will daily make a new start, pure and clean again, for while God may make us bear (as we should sincerely *wish* to bear) the *temporal* punishment for our sin, yet the eternal penalty of our sin is washed away by the Precious Blood of Jesus, and free from that burden

¹ St. Francis de Sales.

with garments washed in the Blood of the Lamb, we go forth to our daily life, in a state of salvation, absolved by Jesus, with the thought of pardon and peace making sweet melody in our hearts.

XVI. Let us learn this lesson of offering our sins daily to God, and have the blessed assurance of the Master, "*Go in peace, thy sins be forgiven thee.*"¹ And let us at stated times offer the Holy Eucharist with special intention that it may be as the prayer of the poor thief which won pardon and peace: "*Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.*" We need every help within our power. We must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Let us then not neglect a means which our Lord has Himself provided for our use and aid.

¹ See St. Luke vii. 37-50.

IV.

THE OFFERING OF OUR DEAR ONES TO GOD.

THE THIRD WORD: "*Woman, behold thy son; behold thy mother.*"—St. John xix. 26, 27.

XVII. OUR LORD sees at the foot of the Cross, Saint Mary His Mother and Saint John the Beloved Disciple. They are standing there, full of unutterable sorrow for the sufferings of Jesus, powerless to extend any comfort to Him save that of silent sympathy and adoring love. The prophecy of Simeon, at the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, is now being fulfilled, as Mary in her sorrow for the agony of her Divine Son, realizes the meaning of those almost forgotten words, "*A sword shall pierce thy soul also.*"¹ The holy Mother knew that the Passion was to be. She had probably been told that only by the sacrifice of His Life, could the Master accomplish the salvation of the world, but, O! how dreadful it

¹ St. Luke ii. 35.

must have been to Saint Mary to see Him Whom she had brought forth at Bethlehem, Whom she had cradled on her knee and nursed at her breast, Whom she knew to be the Only-begotten Son of God, now hanging with stripped and bleeding body upon the Cross, between two thieves, suffering the most exquisite agony!

Jesus sees the Virgin in her love and devotion standing at His feet. He knows the anguish of that loving heart and He would spare her the greater sorrow which was to come, with the shadow of darkness which He saw would soon gradually shroud the whole scene. It *was* a comfort for Him, the Master, to have the silent sympathy of Mary, the humble handmaid¹ of the Lord, yet He, Who never thought of Self, willed to forego even this to spare her who had been sanctified by the Holy Ghost² to be the instrument of His Incarnation and had so tenderly and reverently watched over His early years.

XVIII. Our Lord the Good Shepherd was to lay down His life for His sheep. He would now make part of that sublime sacrifice of Self by send-

¹ St. Luke i. 38, 48.

² St. Luke i. 35.

ing away those nearest and dearest to Him on earth, in order to spare them the last agony. "*Woman, behold thy son,*" "*Son, behold thy mother,*" comes from the Cross. It is the Master's sacred charge and commission to Saint Mary and Saint John, consigning those two holy and devout souls, to a companionship together in a home hallowed evermore by their mutual love and adoration for Jesus, their Lord and King. We cannot exaggerate this sacrifice of the Master, or this sacrifice of those He loved, as obedient to His command, they look long and lovingly upon Him they adored and then, with brave submission and resignation, separated themselves from Jesus on the Cross and went their way to their home, as the shadows settled upon the scene and dense, impenetrable darkness shrouded everything in its depths. Well may we, the children of the Church, so selfish and self-centered, learn this lesson of love in the sublime sacrifice of Jesus, in His agony sending away those who adored Him, and in the submissive obedience of Mary, in her sorrow leaving Him who was her very life. Well may we worship and adore Our

¹ St. John xix. 27.

Lord as God of God, and reverence and honour the Virgin as "*Blessed among women*," the Mother of Sorrows, the Man of Sorrows, sanctifying their several sufferings by undying love and sacrifice!

XIX. In this example is seen the practical lesson for ourselves: the offering of our dear ones to God.

Human love is but the extension of Divine love. Love comes from God and leads to God. It is the one enduring virtue. Faith ends in sight, hope in realization; but love never ends but is everlasting, here on earth growing and blossoming, there in heaven attaining its full fruition in its perfect union with God. Saint Thomas à Kempis says: "Nothing is sweeter than love; nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing broader, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven and in earth; for love is born of God, and can rest only in God above all things created"; and Saint Augustine says, "My heart findeth no true rest till it find rest in Thee," as God is loved in and through the creatures of His Hand.

XX. Human loves, human friendships, and

¹ St. Luke 1. 28, 42.

human relationships are sacred in God's sight, and are the very sunshine and brightness of life. It is through earthly love that we come to appreciate Divine love. In the pure and holy love which should exist between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, is seen reflected and extended the Divine love which unites the Three Persons of the Ever-Blessed Trinity and the sacred bond which joins the One and Only God with the creatures of His Hand. It is right to love our dear ones, to treasure them, to delight in their society, to wish to have them for our own, to love and to be loved. God smiles His Divine approval upon all pure and holy love and abundantly blesses it both to the giver and the recipient of that love. Yet He wishes all persons to be loved *in* Him. He gave us our dear ones to love; He wishes us to offer back to Him those dear ones, not that we may cease to love them, but that thus dedicated to Him and hence regarded as a sacred trust, our love may be all the holier and richer, now that it is freed from the thought of self. For it is self and self only which would withhold our dear ones from fulfilling God's pur-

pose for them, which would make them follow our ways and accede to our wishes regardless of the Divine call to a higher and holier life, here on earth or hereafter beyond the veil.

XXI. Frequently it is due to this failure to sacrifice self in regard to our dear ones that has made such sad wrecks of lives which might have shone as glorious saints among their brothers. How often has this happened. How rarely do people truly offer their dear ones to God. They are willing to give them to the world, for them to gain earthly distinction and surround themselves with the evidences of worldly success, but they are not willing to offer them to God. For instance, parents are ready to see their sons make money and become great and famous in their work or profession, or for their daughters to shine in society and make notable and brilliant marriages, but they are not willing to offer their sons to bear their cross after the Master in the Sacred Ministry, or for their daughters to serve Christ in a holy Sisterhood, or for others to do some splendid, though humble, work as missionary, teacher, or nurse, and the like! Yet what blessing would accrue to

dear ones offering or offered to God, whereby marriage would become *holy* matrimony and children would be brought up in the nurture and fear of the Lord, and old and young, even the yet unborn child, would be given and dedicated to God, to live, to work, and to die according to the Divine Will and Purpose. Or again, how seldom do people offer their dear ones to God in sickness and death. They will not see the Hand of God in these things, they want their dear ones to be well, to remain here, and so they place themselves in antagonism with God, who would sanctify¹ by the sickness or call² to Himself in death.

XXII. Surely God's will should be supreme. If we, in the grace of the Holy Spirit, accept His will by the act of offering our dear ones to Him, then if they live we have this evidence of it being by Divine permission; if they die, we entrust them to His loving care. Some have thought that souls in the Place of Departed Spirits fail to rest in peace through the rebellion and lack of resignation on the part of those here who refuse to bow meekly to God's will! If, however, it matters not to the

¹ Hebrews xii. 6.

² Rev. xiv. 13.

dead, it does to the living, whose characters are thus early marred and their sorrows made harder to bear, when they fail to resign themselves to God's good pleasure.

It is of course hard to see a dear one suffer, it is natural to wish the dear one to live, it is difficult to give up our wishes and aims; but when we remember that God knows best, when we realize the privilege of suffering as a means of fellowship with Jesus and as an aid in the spiritual life, when we see that death to those dying in faith, love, and repentance is but the entrance to a better world and a larger life, surely we should see that it is only self that would hold our dear ones back, instead of fully and resignedly, even with the tears streaming from our eyes, offering them to the Good God. Sometimes, too, the very act of offering our dear ones to God makes Him spare them to us, as a reward for our resignation, where otherwise He takes them from us, since we rest in them and not in Him.

XXIII. Here, then, is another lesson from the Cross: to offer our dear ones to God. Only in this dedication of them and this submission to Him

are our human loves fully enjoyed and rightly cherished. Then they will be received as God's gift to us, we will hold them by Divine permission, we will see God dwelling in and working through our love, using our dear ones and ourselves for His Honour and Glory, as we place all in His hands, safe in the thought of His Infinite love and His Infinite knowledge.

XXIV. And this act of offering assumes a new meaning when we think of life. For our earthly existence is not an end in itself, but is a drop in the boundless sea of eternity, fitting us and our loves for an endless future. Love is undying. Life is endless. A few sufferings and sorrows here are as nothing to the rest and joy of the world to come. When the shadows flee away, when the crown succeeds the cross, then will be found the reward of that perfect submission to the will of God, which here offered our dear ones, and there finds them in heaven, to love and live for evermore in unutterable joy, peace, and glory in the Presence of God.

XXV. The spirit of offering, however, is the result of growth. The natural man, unaided, can-

not attain to it, for self is the one ruling thought. We need the sanctifying power of God. As flowers need the warm sun and the refreshing dew, we need the love of God and the assistance of Divine Grace. Then will we grow, little by little, until we can truly, with perfect resignation and submission not only make our repeated *acts* of offering our dear ones, but also be in a continuous *attitude* of offering. We will come to seek to know God's will and way as to their life and work in the world, we will come to see God's hand as to their sicknesses and death, and we will bow with the resignation of the saintly Job, saying: "*The Lord gave: the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the Name of the Lord.*"¹

Let us then look at the Cross, and note the wonderful lesson of the Third Word of the Master. Let us copy His sublime sacrifice of Self. Let us love our dear ones all the more in that we love God first. Let us offer our dear ones to Him, as into the hand of a Faithful Creator and Merciful Father. Let us learn to rest in God, to desire His will, to be submissive and resigned, for in thus

¹ Job i. 21.

offering our dear ones, with all of our human loves and relationships to Him, we best make for Christian character and the Christian home; we chasten and ennoble and dignify those sacred bonds which unite us to God and to man, and show forth that spirit of unselfish love and sublime sacrifice which Jesus showed when He committed the Holy Mother to Saint John, and gave up those He held dearest.

V.

THE OFFERING OF OUR TRIALS TO GOD.

THE FOURTH WORD: "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"—St. Matthew xxvii. 46;
St. Mark xv. 34.

XXVI. DENSE DARKNESS now veiled the scene, and in cover of that shrouding blackness, the Powers of Evil made their greatest assault upon Our Blessed Lord. The Master was to be the Scape-Goat or Sin-Bearer, as upon Him was placed all the sins of the whole wide world, past, present, and future, for Him to make atonement and make it possible for the penitent sinner to be saved. The great trial of the Cross had come. Before the Mind of Jesus, that All Holy, Spotless Mind, came the awful vision of sin, with its crimes and criminals, its evil and its evil-doers, the long procession of those who had wrecked their lives and ruined their souls by murder, lust, and all manner of mortal sin.

Even our own faces must have been seen in that assemblage, as our sins, little or big as they may be, crucify the Christ afresh and put Him to an open shame. O! the agony of that vision to the sinless Saviour! O! the sorrow of Him who was shedding His Life Blood for man, to know that it was unavailing for some, since they *would* not be saved! O! Sacred Heart of Jesus full of unutterable love and yearning, so powerless over some then and now! Darkness, doubt, disappointment, all presented themselves to the Master, as with Satan mocking at His sacrifice, came the cry of His agonized Mind, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" We may not know the full meaning of the cry. Some have thought that Our Lord was saying portions of the Psalms. We may at least believe this, that it was but the yearning for the Father's Face, momentarily hidden by the vision of sin, and at the same time was a Conqueror's cry uttered for our encouragement and comfort, telling us that we must ever long for the Face of God and in all our trials still be able to say, "*My God, My God.*" Then came peace, as

¹ St. Matthew xxvii. 46.

in the darkness our salvation was won. The Powers of Evil were beaten back, the vision of sin and sinners faded away, the Master was triumphant, the final battle was won.

XXVII. So in our life, there will be the hours of darkness. Some doubt will shake our faith in God, some disappointment will shake our faith in man, some shadow of sorrow and suffering will come and darken all of the sunshine and brightness of our spiritual life, and the Face of the Father will seem to be withdrawn, until we, too, cry out, "*My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*"¹

Yet we are only being tested and tried and developed. On the rainy day the sun is still shining behind the clouds. In our hours of darkness, the Father's Face is still smiling upon us. The sun is all the more beautiful after the rain. God is all the more loved after the trial. It but behooves us to drive back the powers of evil, to bend before the storm as the palm before the tempest, to raise ourselves triumphant in our faith, hope, and love when the clouds have passed by.

¹ St. Matthew xxvii. 46.

XXVIII. The way to accomplish this is to offer our trials and tribulations to God: those doubts that He may change them into faith, those disappointments that He may transform them into patience, those sorrows and sufferings that He may show to us their saving grace. In this spirit we should even *desire* to be tried, and developed, for then we may the more honour and glorify God. Then we will learn both weak and strong points, then we will come to rely upon Divine Grace more than human power, then we will come ever to cast our care upon Him Who careth for us. Would we wish to cross the ocean in a ship which had never been tried? Would we like to lead into battle troops which had never been trained? In our life, temptation and trial prove us and designate us. They are in fact, the measure of God's love and of our merit. The stronger the doubt, the difficulty, or the temptation, when *resisted* and *overcome*, the stronger our characters, the greater our merits. For the Devil never bothers with great temptations, those whom he may claim as his own, at will.

XXIX. Let us learn then to offer our trials to

God, asking Him that we may so bear them that they may be means of many a rich blessing. Then in His grace let us be patient and persevering and prayerful, until in God's good time, the shadows pass away and a wonderful calm and peace settle upon the soul, as the Father's Face, which has never changed, is seen smiling in love upon His conquering children. Thus our very falls will contribute to our final victory, as profiting by bitter experience, we come to be continually on the watch and by being prepared, make the assaults of the world the flesh and the devil end in glorious victory for ourselves.

VI.

THE OFFERING OF OUR BODILY ILLS TO GOD.

THE FIFTH WORD: "*I thirst.*"—St. John xix. 28.

XXX. THE PRECEDING CRY of Our Lord was the anguish of His Soul. That which He now utters, "*I thirst,*" is the expression of the pain of His Body. When we think of all that Jesus suffered during those long hours since He was betrayed and taken, when we think of those six hours, now drawing to a close, when He hung upon the Tree, and picture His bleeding Wounds and fevered Body and parched Lips, we may gain some faint idea of that unutterable agony of the Master which drew from Him those words, "*I thirst,*" sounding out from the solemn stillness about the Cross. Those words fulfilled the Scriptures,¹ drew forth from a soldier an act of sympathy as he offered Jesus wine upon a sponge, and they spiritually signify Our

¹ St. John xix. 28; Ps. lxi. 22.

Lord's yearning love and longing for souls, for souls deep in the depths of sin, for which souls He was laying down His life. Perhaps He saw passing before Him a vision of all the souls ever born or to be born, many of them denying Him, crucifying Him, scorning salvation, preferring sin to their Saviour, wicked and worldly, given over to all manner of evil and vice, following the world, the flesh, and the devil, regardless of the Sacrifice of the Cross, making no response to the call of the Crucified. Perhaps He saw our souls, and all the wrong things we do, so often willingly, knowingly, and deliberately, those sins against God and man. Well might Jesus cry, "I thirst," as He saw souls whom He came to save, going to their doom! But in seeing this spiritual application of Our Lord's words, we must not forget their primary meaning, of His Agony of Body. His cry proved the perfection of His Humanity, that He was true Man. It was a proof of His Incarnation. And it is a picture of physical suffering, all the more intense from Our Lord's perfection, yet suffering willingly, gladly endured for us men and for our salvation.

XXXI. "*I thirst.*" What lessons are contained in these two short words! The thirst we must have in our bodies for the things necessary to their sustenance. The thirst we must have in our hearts for souls to win for God. The thirst we must have in ourselves for spiritual things, for prayer and sacrament, for praise and worship, for virtues and graces, for all that draws us upwards and onwards towards God, for God Himself as the ultimate end of all. Alas! How seldom has man this spiritual thirst which makes him seek to know and love God and to prize above all else his religious privileges and blessings which bridge the gap between God and man, earth and Heaven! How seldom we can say, with the Psalmist, "*My soul is athirst for God: yea, even for the Living God*";¹ or realize Our Lord's promise, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*"²

XXXII. Yet there is another lesson, more often missed perhaps than the first, and that is our attitude towards God, when sooner or later we lie on the bed of sickness, when suffering clouds

¹ Psalm xlii. 2.

² St. Matthew v. 6.

the mind and weakens and wastes the body and the poor, parched, fevered tongue cries out in the words of the Master, "*I thirst.*" Sickness came into the world as a result of the fall. Sickness comes to us as the result of our sins or the sins of our forefathers, but nevertheless the ills come by Divine Permission. For God, by these afflictions, cleanses and purifies us, giving us fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings, offering us a cross to bear, developing our character by making us "*perfect through suffering,*"¹ and teaching us of the shortness and uncertainty of human life and of the endlessness of the great Beyond.

XXXIII. Sickness comes from God to sanctify us. When, then, the cup of pain and sickness comes to us, we should remember that it is the God of *Love*² Who holds it to our lips. We should receive it with resignation, and should offer it to God, that He may bless it to our spiritual gain, that it may thus be in a measure sacramental, that is, that the outward bodily ailments may be the signs of an inward spiritual blessing. Thus when we are sick, we should do three things: first, we

¹ Hebrews ii. 10.

² I. St. Peter iv. 19.

should take our sickness patiently and offer it to God for His blessing; secondly, we should look at the Cross and unite our sufferings with the sufferings of the Master; thirdly, we should seek to perfect our union with God, by prayer and sacraments, by which our will accepts the will of God, and we rest in the recollection of His mercy and goodness, knowing that "*underneath are the Everlasting Arms.*"¹ Or to be more explicit, when we lie on a sick bed, we should not only offer our sickness to God and unite ourselves with Jesus, but we should send for the priest, and, after seeing him, should receive the Holy Communion of Our Lord's Body and Blood, which should be an inestimable comfort to those who love the Master.

XXXIV. Nor should the sick one ever be without a crucifix or picture of the scene on Calvary on the wall, that looking on the representation of the Death and Passion of Our dear Redeemer, he may be moved to larger measure of faith, love, and repentance, and may cheerfully bear his own passion and death if God so wills it. The crucifix is thus no empty symbol or ornament. It is rather

¹ Deuteronomy xxxiii. 27.

a medium of prayer, being an inspiration and illumination to the mind and soul. For as a photograph calls up the memory of a dear one, so the crucifix presents the Passion of Jesus and in a way so dramatic and realistic that it appeals to the love and devotion of the faithful and constrains to the contemplation of heavenly things as nothing else will do.

XXXV. If the sick one be very ill and unable to think much, let him remember that he may pray by intention, that is, he may say the Lord's Prayer with special meaning that it will be for that which he longs to say. Or he may do nothing more than with intense devotion look on the carved Christ of the crucifix and unite himself with the Prayer of Jesus on the Cross. Nor should his attendants be unmindful of his spiritual state, for prayers said for his hearing and the Bible read for his noting, will be of great interior comfort and may also result in great physical improvement.

XXXVI. How many people do not mend in a bodily way simply because their sin-sick souls need a priest and the comforts of religion, and on the other hand, how many persons rapidly recover,

because, with souls stayed on God and resting in His will, their spirits are at peace in Jesus!

Let us now learn this lesson from Our Lord's bitter cry, "*I thirst,*" and when ill, offer our sickness to God, unite our sufferings with those of Jesus, look at the Cross, see the priest, and receive the Blessed Sacrament, and be perfectly resigned to whatever happens, be it life or death. For to those so prepared the Gate of Death is as a door that leads from the darkness into the light, that translates the faithful to a place of rest and refreshment. "*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they do rest from their labours and their works do follow them.*"¹

¹ See Rev. xiv. 13.

VII.

THE OFFERING OF OUR WORK TO GOD.

THE SIXTH WORD: "*It is finished.*"—St. John xix. 30.

XXXVII. THE END of the Sacrifice is almost reached. The shrouding darkness is soon to melt away before the shining sun, "*for at evening time it shall be light,*" when Our Lord, having accomplished the salvation of the world, would hang dead upon the Cross, and preach to the spirits in Paradise.¹

From the tree in Eden came the Fall. From the Tree on Calvary came the Redemption. Only the suffering of the Son of God could atone for man's sin and make the "one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction," for the whole world. For it required a Perfect Offering. Man, stained with sin, could not make this. Therefore the Son of God became Man for us, that by

¹ Zechariah xiv. 7. ² I. St. Peter iii. 19.

His absolutely sinless life and death He could make what man could not do. From the beginning to the end of Christ's holy life, there was not one fault or flaw.¹ Otherwise it would have been un-availing. Yet though tempted in all points like as we are, Jesus was absolutely sinless,² absolutely perfect, the Pattern and Example for all time. Now He was to lay down that life with all its good works, all its boundless store of merits. He was to offer it to God. So from the Cross there came those solemn words of presentation, as His life and work are offered to the Father, "*It is finished.*"³

XXXVIII. It is the ideal for us. It is the lesson of offering our work to God. We may never be able to say, with Jesus, "*it is finished*" in the sense that our work is *perfect*, but we may do so in that other sense that it is *done*, that we have accepted our responsibility and have done our duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call us. Many a person goes on his way accomplishing little or nothing. He has no object in life. He has no

¹ St. John viii. 46. ² Hebrews iv. 15. ³ St. John xix. 30.

rule in life. He simply *drifts*. To such an one Our Lord's words come with strong condemnation, as He holds up before him His Own Perfect Life, and says, "*It is finished*"!

XXXIX. What is our life? What is our work? What are our aims and ambitions, our ideals and standards? Alas! many people entirely miss the meaning of their life and work. They live and work for self. They prefer the "*praise of men more than the praise of God.*"¹ They either love their life and work because they give *them* pleasure and bring *them* profit, or they hate both their existence and their labour, because the one is not easy and the other is not paying. Consequently there are few fruits to be seen.

XL. Life and work, however, should be regarded very differently from this. Life here is given to enable us to fit our souls for heaven. Work is given that we may glorify God by the proper use of our talents, opportunities, and privileges. The bootblack who does his best to shine shoes for the Glory of God is blessed by God. The millionaire who piles up wealth for his own selfish ambition

¹ St. John xii. 43.

is rejected of God. It is not that which we do, but the way in which we do it that tells, and happiness and contentment come and come only in doing all we do, to the best of our ability as in God's sight, for His Glory. There should be in fact a religious atmosphere about our very work, for God the Master Builder is with us, wherever we are. When God brought the present earth into being at Creation and made one after another of His wonderful works, He could say after each, "*And God saw that it was good.*"¹ So with us, when we work, we should so aim to have both the *nature* of our work and the *performance* of our work such that we can hear those words, "*And God saw that it was good,*" as we offer that work to God for His acceptance.

XLI. Work evil in itself and contrary to the Christian profession, no self-respecting man or woman should take; work on Sunday unless time is given for the proper worship of God, should also be refused. It matters not what or where the work is: it should all be offered to God. If a decided vocation or fitness for a certain work be seen, then it

¹ Genesis i. 10, etc.

is our bounden duty to do all we can, to follow that calling. But if the way cannot be made to open, or if from necessity we have to take up some other labour, or if we seem to have no special calling, we should do the work that is nearest, believing that it is God's will, and do it in the sense of His Presence with us as we work.

XLII. Nor let us forget that there must be a division of labour. We cannot all do the same thing. There must be masters and men, there must be those doing the great things, there must be those doing the little things, but all are equally important in the sense that the parts form the whole, and that any one part poorly done or not done mars or detracts from the whole. This is a lesson particularly needed to be noted in the age in which we live, when wrong notions detrimental to the dignity of labour have led many to aspire to do things for which they are not fitted, and have made failures of those who would have been most successful in more modest walks of life, and have caused much poor work to be done.

XLIII. What a dignity then attaches to the most menial work when done to the Glory of God

and offered to Him. The scrub-woman, the street-cleaner, the day labourer, the mechanic, the mill hand, the merchant, the banker, the man of affairs, the doctor, the lawyer, the priest, the woman in the home, the man in the world, are all important in God's sight and their work blessed and crowned by God when done for His Glory and offered up to Him.

XLIV. Let us learn to say "*It is finished,*" by doing our work cheerfully and lovingly, by doing it with method and system, by doing it with attention and thoroughness, by doing it with every effort to make it our *best*—for nothing short of our best is really finished—and doing it with gladness in our heart and a song on our lips. Then let us offer that work to God, asking God for Christ's sake to wash away all the imperfections in the Blood of Jesus and to join all that is good to His merits and mediation. Let us offer our day's work, day by day: it may be those little things about the house, the mending, cleaning, cooking, washing, and the like, or those studies at school, or those books kept at the office, or those bricks laid and those boards sawed as mason and carpenter,

or that tending of those looms at the mill, or those hours spent in hard work in office and counting room, court, hospital, or church, all those successes, all those failures, for God sees them all, God accepts them all. "*Thou God seest me*" should be our first motto in our work. "*First give thyself to God: then to the work God gives thee to do,*" our second thought. For only in working as in God's Sight and Presence, for His Honour and Glory, do we have true joy, inspiration, comfort, and guidance in our work, do we feel the importance and dignity of even the little things, and are able to offer *to God all our work*, from the fulness of heart, knowing we have done our best, and being able to say: "*It is finished.*"

¹ Genesis xvi. 13.

VIII.

THE OFFERING OF OUR SOULS TO GOD.

THE SEVENTH WORD: "*Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit.*"—St. Luke xxiii. 46.

XLV. THE BLACK DARKNESS still shrouds the Cross. Only the Sacred Body of the Master shows forth from the shadows. Huddled together the people look and fear and tremble. The powers of evil have done their worst, but in crucifying Christ they have wrought their own doom, for the sacrifice of the Cross won salvation for the world, and forever beat back Satan and his legions, and conquered death and the grave.

Now the end was come: and not the end those wicked men and those devilish powers had imagined. Sin with fear and hate looked at the Cross. Holiness with love and life hung on the Cross. The suffering, bleeding Saviour was the mighty Conqueror of the world, the Sovereign Lord of Life and Death. His work is now accom-

plished: His life has been offered for man: His death is now to complete the act of Sacrifice, as He, both Priest and Victim, with Blood sprinkled upon the Tree, enters the Holy of Holies, to make atonement for the sins of the whole world. He laid down His life of His Own accord: His enemies had crucified Him, but throughout each act, Our Lord had been a willing Sufferer. Now to give a final proof of His willing sacrifice of Himself, to show that of His Own power He gave up His life, the Master utters one great, tremendous cry,¹ showing that He was the Son of God, rending the veil of the Temple in twain,² causing a great earthquake,³ calling the saints from their graves,⁴ sending fleeing homeward the multitudes beating their breasts with fear and horror,⁵ and making the silent Centurion cry out, "*Truly this was the Son of God.*"⁶ Then all accomplished, Jesus bowed His Bleeding Head upon His Breast and committed His Soul into God's charge: "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*"⁷

¹ St. Luke xxiii. 46.

² St. Luke xxiii. 45.

³ St. Matthew xxvii. 51.

⁴ St. Matthew xxvii. 52.

⁵ St. Luke xxiii. 48.

⁶ St. Matthew xxvii. 54.

⁷ St. Luke xxiii. 46.

XLVI. Jesus Christ is dead upon the Cross. His Body, pierced and bleeding, hangs upon the Tree, His Soul, pure and spotless, is in Paradise, but as God, the Lord of Life, He is with both. His Human Body on the Cross, and with His Human Soul beyond the veil, One Person, with Divine and Human Natures, suffering and dying on the Cross as Man, saving and redeeming the world as God, One Person, the Only Begotten of the Father.

The offering of Himself was complete, with the offering of His Human Soul at death.

What a dreadful death! No couch or covering! No words of love or sympathy! Stripped on the Cross! Alone! Only God! Yet what a perfect death! May not we sinning men and women learn of Jesus Christ to die, seeing in the spotless Saviour the great Example of perfect faith, love, and resignation, seeing in the absence of all comfort the lesson of resting in God, supported by Divine consolation, seeing in the offering of the Master's Soul to God the way for us to give our spirit back to God as life ebbs away!

XLVII. At death God calls us to the life beyond the veil. The bodies sleep but the life of the

spirit goes on forever. As the ship sinks below the horizon and is lost to sight, but still goes sailing on, so the soul leaves the body at death, and passes from earth into that endless eternity beyond the grave. While we are in life we are in the midst of death. As St. Francis de Sales once said, "We know not when death awaits us. Let us then learn to await death."

The soul comes from God: the soul goes to God; as He gave it to us, so we should give it back to Him. The soul is a sacred trust, it belongs to God, it was made for His Glory, it was given to praise and magnify Him in the heavenly places!

XLVIII. Alas! how many souls through unrepented sin are doomed to the outer darkness of Hell, shut out from the sight of God and His Glory! And this dreadful doom may be ours if we trifle with sin or refuse to drive it out, or try to make a compromise between God and the Devil! Only by the continual consecration of ourselves to God and by the practice of holiness can we be safe and sure and be able to offer our souls to God at death, as redeemed by the Blood of Jesus, and as ready, after purification and perfecting in the Intermediate

State, to enter into the joy and glory of heaven. Both in life and death we should ever consign ourselves to God's keeping, never dismayed or discouraged, for God sees us, loves us, cares for us, watches us, and will do all that is needful if we only rest in Him, safe in the Bosom of the Father.

XLIX. If we fill our hearts with the love of God, the Devil cannot find a place. If we live the Christ-life, the life in union with God, perfected by prayer and sacrament, the things of this world will have little hold upon us. If we have that mental and spiritual attitude of recollection, with knees on the ground, eyes on the Cross, and thoughts in heaven, the flesh will have little power to lead us into sin. God should be all in all: our beginning, our end, our aim, our ambition, our very life until His will, His word, His way, His worship are our constant aspiration and our dearest desire. And to realize this, as we have said, there must be the Communion of the Body and Blood of Our Blessed Lord, which is God's food for the soul, the strengthening, refreshing, and cleansing of the spirit, the very bread of immortality.¹ Live with-

¹ St. John vi. 53, 54.

out Communion, and the soul is fairly starved; die without Communion, and the soul is sadly stained, and—if we take Our Lord's words absolutely literally—is lost.¹ Surely, if we value our souls, we will save them for God's Glory! If we love our souls, we will not starve them and stain them! If we love our souls, we will give them Food, the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar! If we love our souls, we will regularly and frequently receive the Holy Communion. Then when our end draws near, and we go down through the valley of the shadow of death, let us go with souls cleansed from sin and strengthened for the journey by the last Sacrament of the Blessed Body and Blood of Our Adorable Saviour, Who hath said, "*Who eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day.*" For those Holy Mysteries are well called the Viaticum or Food for the last journey, whereby with God with us we awake to behold Him face to face. Then and then only can we make the perfect offering of our soul to God, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,*" as the an-

¹ St. John vi. 53, 54.² St. John vi. 54.

gels bear it safely away to meet its Lord and Saviour Whom it has learned to know and love in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar.

L. "WHO, THEN, is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord"¹ in the Life of Offering unto Almighty God? In the shadow of the Cross let us answer the question, as we hear the Master speaking His Seven Last Words of Love. There is the call to the consecrated life: *"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."*

What response will we make to the Crucified? Should we linger in the valleys when the great mountains loom before us, because they are hard to climb? Should we prefer self to Jesus, because to be with Him means the carrying of the Cross? Let us remember that rest comes with the Cross, for He who cannot err hath said: *"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*²

Let us remember that the heights climbed lead to heaven, that the Cross borne wins the crown, and for our encouragement let us see in the saints,

¹ I. Chronicles xxix. 5.

² St. Matthew xl. 30.

³ St. Matthew xvi. 24.

the victory won in lives similar to ours, where the aim and aspiration of the soul was God. For we do not carry the Cross alone or unaided. Jesus, the Burden Bearer, is with us and the grace of God assists us. We need but to press onward patiently and perseveringly, in the power of the Good God, Who is ever there to help by Divine means.

LI. Nothing worth anything is done in a day. The Life of Offering is not attained at once. The foundation stones must be laid before the beautiful superstructure can be built. Patience, perseverance and prayer are the means to the end, God being the Master Builder, we the workmen directed by His Word, the Divine Will, the Plan carried out. Like a little child picking berries, who walks firmly because held up by his father's hand, we pluck the fruits and flowers of a holy life, by prayer and sacraments sustained by the hand of the Father in heaven. We climb by climbing, ever getting nearer and nearer the full realization of the Life of Offering, by constantly keeping the aim before the mind and steadily bending all of our energies to attain to it. As bod-

ily exercise develops the muscles and makes possible feats of strength once beyond us, so spiritual exercise develops the soul and makes us able to accomplish that which at the start was impossible.

LII. "*Nil desperandum*," never despair, is the word of the Christian. "*My grace is sufficient for thee*," is God's word of encouragement. If we cultivate the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, if we with patience and perseverance run the race set before us, if we seek the Divine grace in prayer and sacrament and coöperate with it, by using our every talent, opportunity, and privilege, bending all our energies to accomplish our aim, the impossible will become the possible, the ideal will be realized. Then with a wonderful thrill of joy and thanksgiving we will see ourselves growing more and more into the Likeness of Our Dear Redeemer, until, poor and imperfect copies though we be, we reflect in some measure at least the Glory of His sublime sacrifice of Self, in offering ourselves, with all that we love and all that we have, to be used for the Honour, Praise, and Glory of God. So every cross will be a glorious gem in our crown in that endless future when penitent sinners as glorious

saints, who have overcome self and turned many to righteousness,¹ will shine as stars forever and ever, in the Kingdom of the Father, in the Glory of His Beautiful Face.²

¹ Daniel xli. 3.

² Revelation xxli. 4.

IX.

THE LIGHT IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST.

*"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,
hath shined in our hearts to give the Light of
the Knowledge of the Glory of God in
the Face of Jesus Christ."—*

II. Corinthians iv. 6.

WHEN the shadow of the Cross of Shame and the darkness of sin and death clouded our life on Good Friday, and made us more clearly realize the love of God and the awfulness of sin, we were close to Our Dear Lord, and looking at His sufferings and listening to His words we were moved to new faith, love, and repentance as we saw Light in the Face of Jesus Christ. On Easter, in the triumph of the Resurrection, when we commemorate the Son of God rising again from the dead, coming from the tomb in His glorified Human Nature, again we see Light in the Face of Jesus Christ, as He Who is both true God and true Man, in the splendour of His Risen Body reveals to us the

Glory of God, in the victory over death and the grave won by Our Lord.

How wonderful the light is, both in the natural world and in the spiritual word! How it ever warms, illumines, and purifies, as the sun in the sky, the light of the earth, drives away the shadow of darkness, as the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world, drives away the shadow of sin!

We picture the creation of the present world: all was chaos, the earth was without form or beauty, and darkness brooded over the face of the deeps. What a change came when God said, "*Let there be light,*"¹ and there was light, and the shadows passed away at His command, and at last the work of creation being completed, the world stood forth in all the glory of the light, reflecting the splendour of Almighty God, their Creator.

How sad and strange that in a world of such surpassing beauty, when, as St. Gregory the Great said, "the works of nature were the footprints of the Creator," man, made in the Image of God, after His Likeness, the crowning glory of his Maker, should have forsaken the light, and by the

¹ Genesis 1. 3.

Fall in the Garden of Eden have brought darkness, death, and disease into the world! The soul full of light became full of darkness. The desire for evil, the doing of evil made chaos of the heart of man, robbed his spirit of the form and beauty of godliness and caused to spread over his sin-stricken soul a darkness such as shrouded the earth before there was light, and the Devil held him in durance vile, in which state the will, weakened by sin, assented to evil as the very habit of life.

O! What a change, more glorious and more wonderful than at the Creation, was there, when by the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Light of the world came to dwell among men, and sinners saw Light in the Face of Jesus Christ, in Him who came down from Heaven, and without ceasing to be God, became Man for us, and in His Sacred Person, the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity, shined into our hearts to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God. "*The Light shineth in the darkness,*" It "*lighteth every man that cometh into the world,*" as the Son of God dwelt among us and by His very Presence

¹ St. John 1.

gave form, beauty, and nobility to human life and human character, and men saw life and character in a new light: the Light in the Face of Jesus Christ.

Look at the Life and Death of Our Blessed Lord! Do they not form the purifying and illuminating power of the world? Do they not give an inspiration to every chapter of earthly life? Do they not give us Light in the Face of Jesus Christ? In the Holy Manger, the light of the Nativity radiated in glory from the Babe of Bethlehem, hallowing infancy. In the Home of Nazareth, the light of the Holy Childhood shone forth in that humble abode, sanctifying the home. In His Ministry among men, the light of a Perfect Example revealed precepts put into practice, ennobling work. In the Agony and Passion, the light of patient submission to the will of God illumined the sufferings of the Master and sanctified pain and sorrow. In the Death upon the Cross the light of absolute self-sacrifice and surrender shone forth, brightening the entrance from death into life. Out of the darkness of sin, out of the darkness of sorrow, out of the darkness of

suffering, out of the darkness of death there stands forth in glorious radiance the Sacred Person of the Lord, absolutely perfect in life and in death, giving us, whose eyes are dimmed with doubts, discouragements, and disappointment, *light* in the Face of Jesus Christ.

And on Easter Day, how this Divine illumination seems to shine with an added lustre and beauty, as the Sun of Righteousness Who shineth in the darkness in the Holy Incarnation, stands forth in the more glorious splendour of the Risen Body in the Holy Resurrection! The Tree of Shame is now vacant, the quiet Tomb is now empty, for the Lord is risen from the dead, and the triumph song of the Church has begun!

Who can tell the full glory of the Risen Christ! Who can describe the joy of the faithful throughout the ages in this victory over death and the grave! Is it not by contrast only that opposites are best seen? Does not Good Friday, the day of darkness, reveal in greater glory Easter Day, the day of light? Does not our sorrow for the sufferings of Our Crucified Saviour help our joy in the triumph of Our Risen King? At Crea-

tion, the sun rose upon a darkened world and it was light in the earth. At the Resurrection, the Sun of Righteousness rose upon a darkened life and it is light in the soul. And the joy is not only for Jesus, but also for ourselves, for the Resurrection of Our Lord is our very anchor of hope, the promise of our own glorious future, for as He rose again from the dead so shall all of the faithful rise, to awake after His Likeness, satisfied.¹

What, then, is the knowledge of this Glory of God as revealed in the Face of Jesus Christ? What is the Church's belief as to the Resurrection? On Good Friday we saw Our Lord's Body placed within the tomb; we saw His Soul in Paradise preaching to the "*spirits in prison*,"² offering salvation to those who had gone before, and we know that as God, Our Lord was present both with His Human Body and His Human Soul. The first day, Good Friday, passed, and the Sacred Body of the Master still slept cold and silent in the sepulchre. The second day, Holy Saturday, came, and there was no change. But when the third day, Easter morning, dawned, Our Lord's

¹ Psalm xvii. 16.

² St. Peter iii. 19.

Body and Soul were reunited and in His Power as Almighty God, Jesus Christ rose again from the dead, passing through the solid rock that closed the entrance to the tomb (superior to all the laws of nature, which owned Him as their God and Creator), and then successively appeared to the Holy Women and the Disciples as recorded in the Scriptures.

May we picture the Risen Body of the Lord? We do not presume thoroughly to understand it. But we may so inquire as to its condition that we may grasp such measure of the truth as has been revealed to us, and see the state of our own future bodies. Our Lord's Body at the Resurrection was the same which was born of Mary, was nailed to the Cross, and was placed in the Tomb. It had all of the marks of the Sacred Wounds;¹ it had all of its former powers and possessions, and Our Lord proved its reality by sight,² by touch,³ and by taking food.⁴ It was no new Body but that which He had before, in its risen state exactly the same in substance but different in condition, for Our Lord's

¹ St. John xx. 25, 29. ² St. John xx. 27, St. Luke xxiv. 39.

³ St. Luke xxiv. 31. ⁴ St. Luke xxiv. 43.

Body was henceforth possessed of subtilty, agility, impassibility, and glory, that is, it could pass through any substance, it could be anywheres at will, it could no longer suffer, and it was full of light and beauty.

Such was Our Lord's Resurrection Body, one and identical with that He assumed at the Incarnation, but now gifted with the new powers appertaining to the risen state. Hence the joy, the triumph, the exaltation of those who saw the Sacred Body of Jesus, risen and glorified, but the same Blessed Form which rested in the Manger, was nursed by Mary, was worshipped by Wise Men, and was loved and adored by those who followed Him in His Sacred Ministry! And that joy is ours, as we picture the Sacred Body with its Precious Wounds, the same which was born, died, and rose again in Christ's Own Power as Almighty God, now crowned with Glory in Heaven.

Do we feel our minds and hearts and souls aglow with faith, love, and devotion, or do we long for some further witness of the truth of the Resurrection? If the latter be the case, we point to the Holy Eucharist, for the Sacrifice of the Altar is

the continual evidence and proof of the Risen Lord. There we *know* Jesus in "the breaking of Bread." There we *feel* the *power* of His Resurrection. For the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is not only the continual memorial of His Sacrifice and Death on the Cross. It is also the perpetual gift of the Risen Saviour. For the elements of Bread and Wine but veil the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, hiding from us the Glory of the Risen Lord, which is beyond human sight to behold.

There is a beautiful story¹ told of a man who said to a Bishop who was trying to convert him to belief in Jesus and the Resurrection: "If I could only *see* Our Lord, I would believe in that Sacred Presence, and in this evidence of the Risen Christ. Show me the Lord and let me look upon Him." "My child," said the Bishop, "you could not behold God, for He is too beautiful and glorious for man, stained with sin, of the earth earthy, to look upon and live. I will, however, show you

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 30-35.

² This with several other thoughts was suggested by a Meditation of the Rev. Dr. A. G. Mortimer.

His Ambassador, and from *his* glory you can think of the greater Glory of God." Leading the man from the church into the light of the noon day, the Bishop pointed to the sun shining in his splendour, and said: "See the glory of the ambassador of God." The man raised his eyes and immediately turned them away, as the light blinded him, and said: "I cannot stand the sight." "My child," said the Bishop, with a smile, "if you cannot look upon the glory of the ambassador, how could you look upon the greater Glory of God?" So with us, we must not hope here on earth to see Jesus in revealed Glory, but with the eyes of faith, love, and devotion we may know Him in the Sacrament and learn there of the Risen Lord as we see Light in the Face of Jesus Christ. The Resurrection is the doctrine of life. The Communion is the Sacrament of life. And He Who comes is the Lord of life, to impart to us Divine Life and be the promise and pledge to us of our unending future, hid with Christ in God.

Nor let us forget that which light does: it reveals form and colour, it purifies and warms. On a dark night we cannot see the delicate formation

and exquisite colouring of the flowers, but when the light shines their loveliness is revealed. So in a darkened soul there cannot be seen the form of godliness or the colour of character, but when the Light of the world shines, there the beauty is seen.

Let us first seek the Light in the Face of Jesus Christ, that His Glory may be *reflected* in us and that we may see to think and speak and act aright in that Divine Illumination. And then let us seek that Light in the Face of Jesus Christ, that we may not only be illumined, but may also be *warmed*, that we may be full to overflowing with the love of God. For with ourselves empty of sin and worldliness by Lenten penitence, we must be filled with love and holiness in the risen life, else the Devil will return to the house that was swept, with seven spirits worse than himself, and the last state of that soul will be worse than the first.

But seeking Light in the Face of Jesus Christ, illumined and warmed by our Risen Lord, Lent, Holy Week, and Easter will be real steps in the ladder that leads to God, when by Love of God, Devotion to Jesus, and attendance upon the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, we will live the

risen life, not only talking about Jesus, or thinking about Jesus, but also, and above all, receiving Jesus and living Jesus.

The Psalmist says: "*Thy Face, Lord, will I seek.*" Let us in our life of offering ever seek the Lord's Face, "*looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God.*"¹ Then the Light will shine into our hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, the beautiful Face of Our Risen Lord.

In His Name, then, may we ask and pray that "The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His Face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up the Light of His Countenance upon us and give us peace, both now and evermore. Amen."²

¹ Hebrews xii. 5.

² See Numbers vi. 24-26, and P. B.



